

major role as the interface between Democratic political organizations (such as the DNC) and the White House. McCain told investigators that the question of what Babbitt told Eckstein about Ickes's role in the Hudson matter in their meeting at DOI on July 14, 1995, was at the heart of the inquiry he was making as Chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs in order to determine the course of action the Committee should take on Hudson.

On July 25, 1996, before Sen. McCain received any written responses to his July 19 letter, he sent another letter to Secretary Babbitt, this time about an Interior Department response to McCain's July 19 letter. On July 20, The Washington Post had published an article about McCain's July 19 letters. The article reported that an Interior spokeswoman responding to McCain's letter stated that a federal judge overseeing a lawsuit against the Interior staff concerning the Hudson denial had found "no relationship between the campaign contributions and Interior's handling" of the Hudson application. The article quoted the DOI spokeswoman as stating that the Department had been "vindicated by the courts."⁶⁰⁴

Sen. McCain said he was displeased with what he thought was a serious overstatement by Interior about the court's ruling. Accordingly, McCain again wrote to Babbitt, noting that he had reviewed the judge's ruling and disputed the Department's characterization of that order. McCain wrote that the court's ruling merely found that the facts as to which there was no dispute did not justify the "exceptional" circumstance of discovery beyond the administrative record in a lawsuit based on the Administrative Procedures Act. Sen. McCain stressed that "[t]he allegations raised in the *Wall Street Journal* article remain in substantial factual dispute" and were not resolved by the court's order. McCain requested that Babbitt provide him with the basis

⁶⁰⁴Stephen Barr, *McCain Questions DNC*, The Washington Post, July 20, 1996, at A4.